

For

# **MONEY PALS:**

Being Cool with Cash

And

## **I Know Where I'm Going**

(But Will My Cash Keep Up?)



# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
THE NEED	2
HOW THIS PROGRAM WORKS	4
OBSERVATIONS ABOUT FOSTER YOUTH	5
<i>Foster Youth Need Encouragement</i>	5
<i>Money Is an Emotional Issue</i>	5
<i>Self-Worth Confused with Net Worth</i>	5
<i>Youth May Live in a 'False' Economy</i>	6
<i>Practice and Mistakes Are Part of the Process</i>	6
<i>Influenced by Birth Family</i>	6
<i>Foster Youth Spot Inequalities</i>	6
<i>Need for Positive Reinforcement</i>	7
<i>Consistency Is Key</i>	7
<i>Motivated Money Learners</i>	7
ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	7
A NOTE ABOUT RECORDS	10
USING THIS PROGRAM IN A CONGREGATE CARE SETTING	10
MONEY SKILLS AT DIFFERENT AGES	12

## Part One

<b>PART ONE, TOPIC ONE: WHAT IS MONEY?</b>	<b>18</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	18
POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS	18
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	18
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	18
ACTIVITIES	20
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	21
<b>PART ONE, TOPIC TWO: MONEY AND YOU</b>	<b>22</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	22
POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS	22
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	22
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	22
ACTIVITIES	23
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	24

<b>PART ONE, TOPIC THREE: SAVING FOR LATER</b>	<b>25</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	25
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	25
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	25
ACTIVITIES	26
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	27
 <b>PART ONE, TOPIC FOUR: TAKING IT TO THE BANK</b>	 <b>28</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	28
POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS	28
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	28
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	28
ACTIVITIES	29
CONVERSATIONS WITH FOSTER YOUTH	31
CONVERSATIONS WITH FOSTER YOUTH	31
 <b>PART ONE, TOPIC FIVE: MAKING MONEY LAST</b>	 <b>32</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	32
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	32
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	32
ACTIVITIES	33
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	35

## Part Two

<b>PART TWO, TOPIC ONE: SAVING AND INVESTING</b>	<b>38</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	38
POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS	38
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	38
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	40
ACTIVITIES	40
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	41
 <b>PART TWO, TOPIC TWO: BE A SMART SHOPPER</b>	 <b>42</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	42
POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS	42
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	42
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	42
ACTIVITIES	43
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	44

<b>PART TWO, TOPIC THREE: WORKING FOR A LIVING</b>	<b>45</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	45
POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS	45
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	45
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	46
ACTIVITIES	47
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	49
<b>PART TWO, TOPIC FOUR: SHARING WITH OTHERS</b>	<b>50</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	50
POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS	50
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	50
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	50
ACTIVITIES	51
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	52
<b>PART TWO, TOPIC FIVE: DARE TO DREAM</b>	<b>53</b>
MATERIALS NEEDED	53
POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS	53
YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS	53
TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES	53
ACTIVITIES	54
CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH	54
<b>RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS*</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>BOOKS, GAMES, VIDEOS, AND WEB SITES FOR YOUTH*</b>	<b>57</b>
BOOKS FOR YOUNGER KIDS	57
SOFTWARE FOR YOUNGER KIDS	57
BOOKS FOR OLDER KIDS	58
SOFTWARE FOR OLDER KIDS	58
VIDEOTAPES	58
MAGAZINES AND NEWSLETTERS	59
WEB SITES	59
GAMES	60
<b>MONEY MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR DIFFERENT AGES</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>66</b>



# Introduction

**F**oster youth are special young people. They face challenges most other children can only imagine. Yet, like all children, foster youth have dreams and the potential to lead productive, fulfilling lives. As their caregiver, you can provide the safe haven these children need to begin to think ahead to a better future.

One part of preparing foster youth for the future is to encourage them to have specific, concrete goals and dreams and to help them understand how using money wisely can help them reach their goals. The sooner foster youth (or any youth) begin learning basic money management skills, the more likely it is that they will be able to make positive choices about money when they leave foster care and strike out on their own.

That's why the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National Endowment for Financial Education® (NEFE) have teamed up to produce this Caregiver's Handbook and two guides on managing money for foster youth ages 8 to 15. The program covers, in plain language, some of the financial skills that every young person (and adult, for that matter!) can benefit from having.

Teaching foster youth about money may not be the solution to every challenge they face, but it can help with some of them. Certainly, learning about money can help foster youth develop their potential and get on track to building a brighter future.

## THE NEED

Like most foster caregivers, you are concerned about the future of these young people. You want them to grow into successful adults and lead fulfilling lives. Yet, the statistics tell some sad truths about today's foster youth.

Each year, some 20,000 young people leave foster care because they have reached the age of 18. Out on their own, yet still teenagers, these youth face the difficult adjustment of finding a job, living in an apartment, and managing their money. Many foster teens rise to the challenge, but others are not so fortunate. As you well know, foster youth are less likely to graduate from high school than other teens, more likely to commit violent crimes, have difficulty finding stable employment, frequently depend on public assistance as adults, and often find themselves homeless.

A guide about money management certainly won't solve all these problems. But it can, with your help, go a long way toward developing good money management habits and skills. This guide teaches foster youth to gain the confidence they need to make positive choices in the future. So, let's get started!

## HOW THIS PROGRAM WORKS

*Money Pals: Being Cool with Cash* (aimed at kids 8 to 11 years of age) and *I Know Where I'm Going (But Will My Cash Keep Up?)* (aimed at youth 12 to 15 years old) were developed after speaking with foster parents, youth counselors, social workers, and other foster care professionals. The program has three pieces:

- ❖ A two-part guide for youth ages 8 to 11: *Money Pals: Being Cool with Cash*.
- ❖ A two-part guide for youth ages 12 to 15: *I Know Where I'm Going (But Will My Cash Keep Up?)*. (Note: Foster youth age 16 and over can take advantage of special independent living classes, which also include money management instruction.)
- ❖ This Caregiver's Handbook, which provides tips on how you can help youth build their money skills.

The Caregiver's Handbook can be used for both age groups, either in a home setting or in a congregate care setting. As youngsters complete a chapter in the guide, we recommend that you sign off on it and provide some small reward or recognition for the chapter's completion.

The youth will keep their guides and take them with them if they move to another home, are adopted, or go back to their birth families. You also might help the child create a checklist of money management activities that they have completed, either through using these guides or through some other "real world" experience. For example, if your foster child is in Scouts or belongs to a Boys and Girls Club, those organizations also might have programs in money management that provide additional opportunities for your youth to build his or her money management portfolio.

As you look through the Caregiver's Handbook, you will notice that it is organized in a way that makes it as simple and easy to use as possible:

- ❖ Each topic—for example, "Money and You"—is briefly defined.
- ❖ A list is provided of materials that will be needed for completing the guide chapters and the activities suggested in this handbook.
- ❖ A list of potential field trips is provided to give you a quick overview of the types of activities you might consider doing with your foster youth.
- ❖ The chapters in the youth guides that cover the topic are listed.
- ❖ Tips are provided for helping youth complete their guides and better understand the topic.
- ❖ Activities are suggested for both older and younger children.
- ❖ Challenging situations are addressed, with possible conversations you might have with a foster youth about the situation.

- ◆ At the end of the handbook, a list of resources about money management is provided. One list suggests resources for adults. Use these resources if you would like to learn more about a topic discussed in this handbook. A second list provides the names of books, videos, games, and Web sites about money for your youngsters to enjoy.

## OBSERVATIONS ABOUT FOSTER YOUTH

In many ways, foster youth are like other children. They need love and security, are curious and funny, and can test your patience a hundred times a day! But foster youth also have special needs and challenges, which will affect how you talk with them about money. The following sections are a few observations that may help you as you work with these young people.

### Foster Youth Need Encouragement

**Foster youth need your encouragement to dream and have goals for the future.**

Sadly, foster youth are often undersold on their potential. You can reverse this situation by encouraging your youth to have dreams. Show them how to turn their dreams into realistic goals, what steps they will have to take to reach their goals, and how to manage money and take advantage of other resources to make their goals possible.

Empower your youth to believe that they *can* take charge of their lives and reach for a brighter future. Think of yourself as the child's coach for the game of life.

### Money Is an Emotional Issue

**Money is an emotionally charged issue for foster youth.** Actually, money is an emotionally charged issue for *anyone*. How we feel about money often reflects experiences we had as children, when we watched the adults in our lives spend, save, and talk (or argue) about their money.

Foster youth may have watched many adults handle money—their birth families, other foster parents, parents of their friends. When you talk with children about money, give them an opportunity to tell you about what they have seen in the past and how they feel about it. Let them talk without your passing any judgment. The more time you provide for this give and take, the more receptive your youngster will be to learning a new, perhaps healthier, approach to managing money.

### Self-Worth Confused with Net Worth

**Foster youth may confuse their “self-worth” with “net worth.”** Again, this can be said about many of us, but it is especially true for young people who often place great emphasis on the importance of material goods. For them, money can be the ultimate status symbol.

Take advantage of opportunities to praise your youth for their personal qualities. Help them understand that what's inside of them—their character—determines their true worth to others. Money is important, but it cannot buy everything, including happiness or close personal relationships.

## Youth May Live in a 'False' Economy

**Foster youth live in a unique money environment, perhaps even a “false” economy.**

They may have come from homes that are financially unstable. In the foster care system, they may know that money comes into the household to help pay for their expenses, but they may not know where the money is spent, or how it is used to take care of them. One foster youth said that when she reached age 18, she realized for the first time that she was expected to pay the doctor when she went for a visit. Another youth said she had never seen an electric bill.

Talk to your foster youth about how money comes into—and goes out of—your household. Help them develop realistic expectations about money. Give them opportunities to visit the bank, look at paycheck deductions, and watch you make decisions as you spend, pay bills, and save money.

## Practice and Mistakes Are Part of the Process

**Foster youth need opportunities to practice real-life skills—and make real-life mistakes.** The only way to learn how to ride a bike is to practice riding it, even if that means falling off a few times. The same is true with managing money. Give your foster youth opportunities to earn their own money, and save and spend it.

Show them how their spending decisions lead to real-life consequences. If they decide to blow two months' savings on a new pair of shoes, for example, that's OK. They may not have any money to go to the movies with their friends, but this is a perfect opportunity to help them understand the consequences of their decisions.

Though we discourage bailing them out, if you do decide to lend them money on a rare occasion and for a good reason, charge interest so that they understand that there are consequences for their overspending. Allow your youth to benefit from small mistakes now, while they have your support and care, so they will learn how to avoid perhaps much more serious money management mistakes later on.

## Influenced by Birth Family

**Foster youth often are influenced by how their birth families handle money.**

Some foster youth may have seen their birth families spend unwisely and go into debt. They may think that it is normal to manage money that way. Or, the child may come from a culture in which saving money is not a strong value.

Avoid telling your youth that their families are wrong. Instead, show them other ways to manage money that may result in a better outcome. Some ways to talk with foster youth about these difficult situations are suggested later in this handbook.

## Foster Youth Spot Inequalities

**Foster youth are quick to recognize inequalities.** If you are raising your own children with foster kids, do you treat everyone the same in terms of money? If not, how do you explain that to them?

For example, if your foster kids know you are saving to send your birth children to college, but not them, you may need to have a frank discussion with your foster youth about your responsibility to educate your children and the limits of your budget. Whatever you say,



emphasize that it has no bearing on the foster youth's worth as a human being. These are tough conversations, but bringing issues into the open and discussing them honestly are the best ways to help lessen negative feelings.

### Need for Positive Reinforcement

**Foster youth need positive reinforcement.** Children in the foster care system often feel like second-class citizens. Use this program as a way to recognize their achievements. For example, when they complete a chapter—or give it a good try—reward their efforts with a special privilege or treat. Younger children may enjoy having stickers to put on their guides. Older youth may prefer a reward such as permission to watch their favorite TV show.

Keep in mind that finding ways to reward youth without spending money is a great lesson in itself. And, a reward of your time can be especially meaningful—planning a special activity with just you and your foster child.

### Consistency Is Key

**Foster youth thrive on consistency.** Often, these children have come from very chaotic homes. As you set consistent limits and provide structure for their lives, foster youth will learn to be more structured and responsible themselves. Your consistent limit setting, if done in a nonjudgmental, gentle way, can help instill in your youth a sense of self-discipline about money and about life skills in general.

### Motivated Money Learners

**Foster youth have characteristics that can be an advantage in learning about money.** As foster children develop their survival skills, they often become more perceptive, adaptable, and resourceful than other children their age. Some of these children may even have been thrust into the position of being responsible for their brothers and sisters—or even their parents—and may have far more experience in handling money than the average child.

These characteristics can make foster youth receptive learners about money management, especially when talked about in real-life terms. Your youth may be skeptical at first, but after you gain their trust, you will make great strides toward building their knowledge, skills, and self-confidence in managing money wisely.

## ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Question:** *I am so busy already. How can I find time to teach my foster kid(s) about money management?*

**Answer:** When you look at the youth guides, you'll see that the children can do most of the exercises on their own. Ask them to set aside about two hours a week to complete each chapter. Your commitment will be to answer questions, review each chapter with the youth, sign off when a chapter is completed, and provide some type of reward or recognition for the youth's efforts.

Many of the additional activities suggested in this Caregiver's Handbook can be done as part of your daily routine. For example, when you go grocery shopping, take your foster youth with you so they can watch how you compare prices, use coupons, buy on sale, and so on. When you pay bills, show your youth how you write checks, or let them practice filling out several of them. When you go to the bank, invite the youth to go with you.

You already may be encouraging your youth to assume responsibility and learn about money by giving them an allowance, opening a savings account for them, assigning chores around the house, or involving them in shopping decisions. If you are, keep it up!

It may be more work at times to let youngsters do things for themselves because they will make mistakes. But they will learn from their mistakes if they are allowed to experience the natural consequences. You simply need to be there to provide support and encouragement.

***Question:*** *I don't think I do a great job managing my own money. How can I teach someone else what to do?*

***Answer:*** Few of us manage our money as well as we would like to, and we are not suggesting that there is only one "right" way to manage money. Think of yourself as a coach, not a financial expert.

Talk with your foster youth about what you think you do well, and where you think you could do better. If you have made mistakes in the past, share the ones you feel comfortable talking about with kids. Let them learn from your good examples as well as from your mistakes.

***Question:*** *What if I don't understand some money terms?*

***Answer:*** Financial information can be complicated. However, these youth guides are designed to provide information as simply as possible for children ages 8 to 15. When new terms are introduced, they are defined in an easy-to-understand way.

In addition, a list of resources is provided at the end of this Caregiver's Handbook if you would like to learn more about a topic. The resource list also provides books, games, videos, and Web sites that your foster youth may enjoy.

***Question:*** *Will I have to manage my money differently because I am teaching foster kids about money?*

***Answer:*** No. This program never says that one way is right and another way is wrong. As you go through the guides with your foster youth, you may learn some new tips or different ways of managing money that might work well for you. If so, great. By the same token, please draw on your own experiences and skills to pass along other money management tips to your foster youth.

***Question:*** *What if the child resists doing the guide?*

***Answer:*** There is no requirement that the guide must be completed. However, learning about money management is such an important skill for a foster youth's future independence that we hope you will keep encouraging the youth to try.

You might drop the subject for a week or so, and then reintroduce it when the child seems more receptive to something new. If possible, negotiate a timeframe for finishing each chapter—one a week, for example. Consider providing a reward for finishing each chapter. If a particular activity does not go well, skip it. Listen to what your kids are telling you and keep things moving.

Most important, explain to your youth *why* learning about money is so important. You might say, for example, “Soon, you will be grown up and will want to find a good job, live in a nice house, take vacations, and perhaps have a family of your own. Or, maybe you will want to go to college first, or open your own business. All of these things will require you to know how to save money and spend it wisely. I want your dreams to come true. Learning about money will help you do that. So, let’s give it a try, OK?”

***Question:*** *My youth says he or she already knows this information. Now what?*

***Answer:*** You might hear this response from older kids, especially teenagers. If so, challenge them to answer some questions about money that you find in the guide. If they do not do very well, explain that these are things they should know to become financially independent.

Most teens will rise to this challenge because they really do want to know more about being independent and they want to prove to you that they’ve got what it takes. To enrich their understanding further, suggest some of the books, videos, or Web sites listed at the end of this handbook.

***Question:*** *What if the youth has difficulty reading?*

***Answer:*** Ask the youngster to practice his or her reading by reading the guide out loud to you. Alternatively, you could read the guide out loud to your youth. Use this time to help the child develop his or her reading skills and to emphasize why it is so important to read well in today’s world.

***Question:*** *I have several foster children. How does the program work in my situation?*

***Answer:*** Each child can work on his or her own guide independently or together as a small group. That’s up to you.

***Question:*** *What is the social worker’s role in this program?*

***Answer:*** Typically, the social worker will be the person who makes sure the youth receives the guides and she or he will be available to discuss issues with you. Before beginning the guide with your child, talk with the child’s social worker about what the consequences will be if your foster youth doesn’t manage money well. That way there will be no surprises.

For example, if the child has blown all of his or her money on new sneakers and, as a consequence, doesn’t have money for a new coat, the social worker will know the reason why the child is wearing last year’s coat to school instead of a new one. Some caregivers worry that if they let their foster kids live with the consequences of poor decisions, they will get in trouble with social services.

Talking with the social worker before starting this program with your child may relieve you of that worry. However, allowing foster youth to practice and make small mistakes in a safe environment is one of the best ways for them to learn how to avoid big mistakes later. Ask your social worker to be a partner with you in this effort.

***Question:*** *How can I prepare myself to teach my foster youth about money?*

***Answer:*** The topics that are covered here are all familiar to you, but perhaps you haven't thought about them in a while, or in the same way. Before you introduce a chapter to your child, take a few minutes to read through the youth guide yourself and review the chapter in the Caregiver's Handbook that deals with the same topic.

Feel free to add other activities or discussions from your own experiences in managing money. Most of all, have fun. Children love adults who have a good sense of humor. Keep the lessons fun and learning will follow.

***Question:*** *How will I know if my foster youth are learning what they need to know?*

***Answer:*** A chart is provided to show what foster youth should know at certain ages. Use this chart as a guide to the activities you do with the kids, or topics to emphasize at certain ages.

## A NOTE ABOUT RECORDS

If you and your social worker have not discussed what records your foster youth have and where they are kept, now is a good time to have that conversation. Below is a list of records your youth may need to set up a savings account, apply for a part-time job, or will need at the time of emancipation, adoption, or reunification with the birth family:

- ◆ birth certificate
- ◆ Social Security card
- ◆ school records
- ◆ medical records
- ◆ bank or credit union statements
- ◆ state identification card or driver's license

## USING THIS PROGRAM IN A CONGREGATE CARE SETTING

If you are a caregiver in a congregate care setting or a social worker who plans to offer the program to several youngsters, most of the ideas presented in this handbook can be adapted to your needs. On the following page, you will find a few suggestions for making these adaptations.

- ◆ Read through the youth guides to make sure that the exercises can be completed by your youth. If not, modify the exercise or omit it. For example, one activity suggests that the foster family involve the youth in budgeting decisions. You might modify the activity by sharing with youth information about the cost to run your group home, where the money comes from, and the kinds of budgeting decisions you make.
- ◆ Read through this Caregiver's Handbook and make notes about which activities you plan to do with your youth. Several activities involve trips to the grocery store, shopping mall, or a bank. If possible, take the youth on these excursions, either individually or as a group field trip. Some businesses and organizations provide excellent behind-the-scenes tours for young people if you call in advance.
- ◆ Many activities encourage the caregiver to provide youth with opportunities to earn money, save it, and make spending decisions. Within the constraints of the group setting, try to provide these same opportunities for your youth so they can have some realistic experiences in managing money.
- ◆ If you plan to have the youth complete their guides together, we recommend assigning one chapter a week and then holding a "Money Meeting" to discuss the chapter.
- ◆ If some of the youth are using the guide for ages 8 to 11 and others are in the older youth's guide, consider having two groups. The reason two groups may work better than one is because the exercises are not the same in both guides and the concepts are not always presented in the same order. In addition, the older youth guide contains topics that are not covered in the younger youth guide. If you decide to bring both age groups together, ask the older youth to help mentor the younger children. Make sure this happens in a positive way that encourages the younger ones to learn.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for the youth to share experiences about managing money with others in the group. Take advantage of peer-to-peer learning. This approach can work especially well with teens, who often listen better to their peers than to the adults in their lives.
- ◆ At your Money Meeting, consider showing one or more of the videos listed at the end of this handbook, or subscribe to one of the suggested magazines. Help your youth visit the recommended Web sites.
- ◆ Invite guest speakers to your Money Meetings. Prepare your guest speaker beforehand by sharing the guide with him or her, describing your youth, and explaining what type of information will interest the group. Request that the speaker give a short presentation with lots of opportunity for group participation. Before the speaker arrives, coach the youth on the types of questions they may wish to ask.
- ◆ Recognize that some teens are busy and may not be able to attend your group meetings. If so, encourage them to complete the guide independently and then meet with you to discuss their progress.



### TOPIC ONE:

## *What Is Money?*

**L**ike all of us, each foster youth has his or her own ideas about money. Some children are just beginning to learn the basics of what money is and how money can be used to spend, save and invest, or share with others. Other youth have strong feelings about money's role in their lives. Help your foster youth understand that money is a tool to help them reach their goals, but that money cannot buy everything.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- ◆ pencil for guide exercises
- ◆ money—all denominations (paper and coin)
- ◆ items to use for bartering game (Activity No. 1 on page 20)
- ◆ piggy bank or some other container for kids to hold money in
- ◆ old magazines to cut out pictures for guide activities
- ◆ drawing paper, crayons, or colored markers

### POTENTIAL FIELD TRIPS:

- ◆ Take a walk through the neighborhood or park (Activity No. 5 on page 20)

### YOUTH GUIDE CHAPTERS:

- ◆ Part One, Chapter 2 of *Money Pals*: “Money and You”
- ◆ Part One, Chapter 1 of *I Know Where I’m Going*: “I’ve Heard of ‘The Money Pit’—But ‘The Money Tool?’”

### TIPS FOR COMPLETING THE YOUTH GUIDES:

- ◆ Review the exercises with the youth. You’ll notice that the younger child’s guide explains, in simple language, what money is, what it looks like, and how to count it.
- ◆ The older youth’s guide talks about values in relation to money, such as the value to buy things for friends or the value to save for college. There are no right or wrong answers; simply use these exercises to start your youth talking about values and money.

- ◆ Both youth guides explain what money is used for: (1) to spend, (2) to save and invest, and (3) to share with others. Ask your youth to tell you about ways that they have used their money to spend, save/invest, or share with others. Talk with your youth about how you have used your money to do these same three things. Also share examples of times when you felt you could have done better. Especially with older children, sharing your imperfections can encourage them to open up with you.
- ◆ The chapters also explain what money can't buy: happiness, friends, self-worth. Help your youth understand that while money is important, it can't get them everything they want.

## ACTIVITIES:

**Note:** ★ indicates appropriate for youth ages 8 to 11; ☀ indicates appropriate for youth ages 12 to 15.

1. Help the youth understand why money is used instead of trading or bartering for things. Play a game in which everything the youth wants for that day must be paid for with an item instead of money (for example, golf balls, soup cans, or spoons become “money”). Soon, the youth will get the idea that it is awkward to carry golf balls around to pay for things. That is why money was invented. ★
2. Give youngsters opportunities to see, hold, and use money. If they don't have a purse, wallet, or piggy bank to keep money in, buy them one. Let them look at the money in your wallet, identify coins, and practice making change with you. ★ ☀
3. When you give the youth an allowance, consider giving it in small bills and change so the youth can have further practice in understanding various denominations of money.
4. When you buy something at the store or in a restaurant, allow your youth to pay for it and learn how to make sure they get back the right change. ★ ☀
5. Take a walk through the neighborhood or in a park. Talk about the things you see that money can buy (house, fence, car) and the things that money can't buy (sunshine, laughing children, wildflowers). ★ ☀
6. Give the youth some old magazines and ask them to cut out pictures of things they would like to buy or have now (such as food), soon (such as Rollerblades™) or later (such as a home, a car, or a great job). Or, let the youth draw pictures of these things or simply make a list. Explain that these things are examples of short-term, mid-range, and long-range goals. Talk about how money is a tool that can help them reach their goals. ★ ☀

## CONVERSATION WITH FOSTER YOUTH:

### *“I’ll never have anything.”*

Sometimes foster youth believe that they will never have the things other people have because of the situation they find themselves in right now. Help your youth see that there can be a brighter future ahead for them. You might say:

“I understand why you may feel that way. Your birth family hasn’t been able to help you very much, and we’re not rich, either. But that doesn’t mean you can’t have a great life. Most of it depends on what you want your life to be like and how determined you are to make your dreams come true.

“In school, you probably have read about people who started with almost nothing and then became great writers, inventors, or business owners. These stories are not just made up. It still happens today. Just look at Oprah Winfrey. She grew up poor and, for a time, was in and out of trouble. Now look at her! What happened? She made a choice—she chose to change her life. You can make the same choices—choices like studying hard in school, helping other people, learning how to earn money and save it, and finding a way to get the education you need to have a great job someday. I’m convinced that you can, and I will help you in every way possible to make your dreams come true.”

